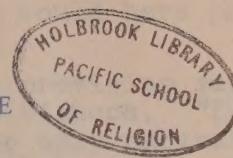


CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by
THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE
Sigtuna, Sweden



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May 30th, 1961.

Northern Comments on Space Flights.

Everywhere in the Northern countries the Soviet and the American experiments in connection with rocket flights in space have been followed with keen interest and various newspapers have commented on the recent achievements. It is generally agreed that the successful attempts are triumphs of technology; but it is pointed out by many that humanity is neither happier nor better on account of them. A typical editorial in the Danish "Kristeligt Dagblad" concludes as follows:

"Considering the world of to-day, the Soviet achievement in space is a victory - a monument for an era in which machines, technology, and science are regarded as the elements which determine life ... - the victory of technology in a world which really needs victories in other spheres more vital to mankind."

The Swedish weekly in Finland the "Församlingsbladet", is afraid that the possibilities inherent in the mastery of space may be utilized for war. The paper writes: "Man can sometimes be an 'angel'; but history shows that more often he becomes a 'devil'. To all appearances Major Gagarin is a sympathetic and courageous young man. But what is to prevent the superior authorities of a future sympathizer of Eichmann from placing him at the controls of a spaceship loaded with atom- and hydrogen-bombs, constructed to spread death and destruction over our earth?"

The religious daily paper in Oslo the "Vårt Land", points out that the Soviet ovations in honour of Gagarin and his flight in space reached the nature of virtual religious homage. "It is the godless, materialistic human who lauds himself as god", the paper writes and continues: "When man in his arrogance exalts himself to the state of god, then mankind is really in the utmost danger. At that moment he has literally lost his foothold in the reality of life and may in his insolence commit the most awful deeds."

DENMARK

More Possibilities for Laymen to Preach from the Pulpit.

On the recommendation of the Minister of Church Affairs the Danish Parliament has passed a Bill to the effect that laymen may preach in the Lutheran National Church. So far laymen have been allowed to preach only at special services, but the new Act allows them to preach also at ordinary Sunday services.

On being approached about their opinion prior to the introducing of the Bill in Parliament, the majority of the Bishops of the Lutheran National Church had expressed the wish that a provision be added stating

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THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE
Stockholm, Sweden

Dear Dr Harry Johnson, Stockholm, Sweden
Dear Rev. Lars Langelund, Past. Bishop of the West Indies

Stockholm, June 10, 1901.

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Answers to Special Topics.

Answers to the following questions will be given in the next number of the "Northern Ecumenical Institute" news sheet. Please send your questions in time to receive answers.

What is the "orthodox" view of the "Gospel of John"?

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clergyman must always deliver a sermon on the text of the day even though a layman is also to give a sermon. This amendment was also carried although it appeared that the majority of the House would have preferred to leave it out.

The "Kristeligt Dagblad", although finding the provision superfluous satisfied that Parliament took the advice of the Bishops. "In such internal matters of the Church it is, of course, the only natural thing to do", the paper writes.

anish Architect Designs Chapel for the World Council of Churches.

Mr. Erik Møller, Architect, Copenhagen, is at present working on a drawing for the furnishing of a chapel in the new headquarters at Geneva of the World Council of Churches. He was given the difficult assignment on the recommendation of the "Ecumenical Building Committee" under the Ecumenical Council of Denmark, the World Council of Churches having requested the Danish Committee to try to find a Danish architect who, in co-operation with the Swiss Firm of contractors in charge of the work, might be able to solve the problem. The chapel is to be so arranged and furnished as to be used by all the Confessions represented by the member churches, but it has been particularly stressed that the hall is to be a chapel and not a church.

Mr. Erik Møller is 51 years old. He is the consultant of the Copenhagen Church Foundation and has designed the "Advent's Church" in Copenhagen. He and a colleague have designed the new town hall in Aarhus, and as quite a young man he was for some time engaged in the erection of the building of the League of Nations at Geneva. Mr. Møller may possibly be asked to furnish also a number of rooms other than the chapel in the new building of the World Council of Churches.

The "Lagting" of the Faroe Isles in Favour of a Vice Bishop.

By 19 votes in favour and 11 blank, the Faroese Representative Council has passed a resolution requesting the Danish Ministry of Church Affairs to assist in the conversion of the office of Rural Dean of the Islands, the highest ecclesiastical office on the Isles, into a Vice Bishopric.

The Faroe Isles are a part of Denmark, but enjoy extensive independence. The Church Ministry will undoubtedly comply with the Faroe request.

News in Brief:

- In a recent statement issued by the annual conference of the Christian Social Democratic Union in Denmark the approval is expressed of the fact that the Social Democratic Party in its new draft for a Party Programme (see CN No. 66 and No. 67) "has left its original negative view on the value of a personal religious conception of life". At the same time, it advocates that the following sentence from a Party declaration in 1957 be added to the Programme: "The Social Democratic Party is open to all irrespective of their Social Democratic conception being founded on economic, ethical or religious ideas".

- In the autumn the Copenhagen Church Foundation will conduct a course for clergymen in co-operation with prominent employers and trade union leaders. The course aims at acquainting clergymen with the problems connected with industrial life in modern society.

- From June 11th-16th the Jehovah's Witnesses will conduct an international conference in Copenhagen which is expected to be attended by 25,000 adherents, among them practically all the 9,000-10,000 Danish members of the movement.

FINLAND

The Religious Press and the Presidential Election.

The preparations for the Finnish Presidential election to take place early in 1962 have resounded also in the religious Press during the spring. Judging from appearances, the present President Dr. Urho Kekkonen, may count on support from the Agrarian Party, the Communists, and the Social Democratic independent group, the so-called "Simonites". The Social Democratic Party will put up the former Attorney General, Mr. Olavi Honka, who is supported also by the non-Socialist Coalition Party, as well as the Finnish and a majority of the Swedish Liberal Party. Among the members of the last Party, however, also President Kekkonen has supporters such as Dr. Tor Krook, D.D., in an article in the daily paper "Människan", emphasizes that the reason for President Kekkonen obtaining only one Swedish vote at the last Presidential election was a fear that he, an agrarian, would adhere to the traditional anti-Swedish line of the Party. But now it seems as if he has succeeded in persuading his Party to adopt a new and better line of policy on this point, for which reason President Kekkonen may be expected this time to receive support from Swedish quarters, not the least from the farmers.

In an interview with the Capital newspaper of the Swedish Liberal Party, the "Medborgarbladet", the other Presidential Candidate, Mr. Olavi Honka, stresses his Scandinavian sympathies. In this connection he mentions the fact that a great number of the Northern contacts are kept up by the Swedes in Finland, their importance thus exceeding what might be expected at first glance from their percentage in the population. It is important, Mr. Honka continues, that the Swedes in Finland feel happy and secure in our common home country, and he is certain that the Finnish majority of the population realize this fact.

Christianity and Socialism.

In Helsinki (Helsingfors) Mr. Hannu Soikkanen recently defended a thesis on "The Coming of Socialism to Finland". In an interview in the religious paper "Kotimaa" Dr. Soikkanen said about the relations between Socialism and Christianity, among other things:

"All through our Church the Old Lutheran idea has prevailed that society, precisely in its contemporary form, was created thus by God and that any attempt to change it into something else constituted rebellion against the will of God. In 1898 when the first wave of strikes rolled over the country it was, consequently, severely condemned from the pulpits. Ever since then, relations between the Church and the active members of the Labour movement have been strained, although here, too, a notable change has taken place. - If Christianity is regarded as nothing but religious customs and traditional magic rites, a remarkable secularization may certainly be said to have taken place. But the kind of Christianity which is attained through personal struggles for a conviction, as may be found, for instance, in the religious revivalist movements, has been preserved unchanged."

Inflation in Ecclesiastical Titles.

The religious paper "Kotimaa" has a feeling that at the moment an inflation in ecclesiastical titles may be noted in Finland. At present there are, for instance, some 600 pastors with the title and dignity of Rural Dean, the article states, and goes on to say: "No other group of Civil Servants is so richly officially awarded. It may be questioned, and justly, whether the present practice of conferring honorary distinc-

ons is in accord with the demands of our time. Is a title, conferred everybody practically without conception, of the value originally intended? And as this is particularly true of official recognition of ecclesiastical Civil Servants, would it be wrong to suggest the doing away with this whole system?"

News in Brief:

In the Church of Meilahti (Meijland) in Helsinki (Helsingfors) a week-day service was held recently at which the sermon was formed as a biblical conversation between Rev. Tauno Sarantola and Mr. Ilppo Kangas, graduate in Agriculture.

The American missionary, Mr. Stanley Jones, will lead an "Ashram" retreat) at the Folk High School at Jämsä in the middle of June.

NORWAY

isquiet about the Woman Minister.

On May 7th Norway's first woman minister, Mrs. Ingrid Bjerkås, was installed in her office as Vicar of Berg. On her journey there she was cheered in various ways. Thus a number of people, mostly women, had turned up on the quay when she left Tromsø, and flowers were sent aboard.

Prior to her arrival at Berg, the Acting Rector during the vacancy, Rev. Andreas Andreassen, in a local daily paper had described the appointment and ordination of Mrs. Bjerkås as "a violation of the words of the Scriptures and a step in the general secularization of the Church in a liberalistic direction." Calling the Bishop of Hamar, Bishop Schjelderup, a denier of the Scriptures, the article goes on: "Those who have backed her up must take their stand around her pulpit; the others must regard her as not appointed. The attitude must be the same as in the case of a Liberal clergyman."

The Rector's article has caused rather an upheaval, and a woman member of Parliament has submitted to the Government Minister for Church and Education the question "whether Government does not find reason for objecting to a Norwegian Civil Servant publicly advocating the boycott of a lawfully appointed colleague?"

Several leaders of the voluntary religious organizations have asked the six Bishops, who in a joint declaration dissociated themselves from women ministers, to side officially with the Acting Rector as his action is felt to be the practical consequence of the Bishops' attitude on grounds of principle. This has not happened, however. Bishop H.E. Visløff feels that the Rector's reference to Bishop Schjelderup as a denier of the Scriptures is "far too strong an expression".

In an open letter in the Press to Bishop Alf Wiig, North-Hålogaland, who is the superior of Mrs. Bjerkås, the Chairman of the Clergymen's Association for Bible and Confession, Professor Leiv Aalen, has requested the Bishop to make arrangements for those members of the parish of Berg who do not wish to be administered to by the woman Rector to obtain other ecclesiastical assistance with regard to divine services, Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confirmation. Otherwise these parishioners must help themselves, the Professor writes.

"The Free Church must be Prepared for in Time . . ."

In an editorial the organ of the Norwegian Clergymen's Association, the "Kirkebladet", advocates that preparations should begin as soon as possible for the change over of the Lutheran National Church to a Free

church, "the days of the National Church being numbered", as Bishop Otto Ibelius expressed it during his visit to Norway recently.

It may yet be a long time until the separation between State and church is a fact in all countries, the paper writes, but it must surely come. The conditions which made a connection between State and Church cultural, even obviously right, no longer exist. The paper does not feel the situation in Norway to be acute, although both the discussion about ordination and the controversies with regard to women ministers have made any people stop and think.

The "Kirkebladet" enumerates a number of fundamental and practical matters which must be solved at a future reorganization of the National church and recommends that the problems are thoroughly dealt with while there is still time for it, at the same time expressing its appreciation of the golden opportunities of the Church in the present situation.

In a leading article the religious daily paper in Oslo, the "Vårt Land", is fundamentally of the same opinion as the "Kirkebladet" with regard to the future of the Norwegian National Church.

Training Centre at Bergen for a Northern "Peace Corps".

According to the religious daily in Oslo "Vårt Land" steps have been taken for the establishment of a training centre for young people from the Northern countries who volunteer for service in a "Peace Corps" in the developing countries. The first course of four months is planned for the autumn by the Association of "Refugee Friends in West Norway", and it is contemplated to change this association into a relief organization for refugees and developing countries, offering information about and support of the "Peace Corps".

Suggestion for Northern Missionary College.

In an editorial the Norwegian weekly "Vår Kirke" suggests that the Northern Missionary Council undertakes the establishment of a Northern missionary college which might provide the best possible preliminary training of missionaries for their future vocation. Special courses for laymen going out on service in the developing countries are proposed to be conducted in connection with the college.

New State of Tension between the Church and the Voluntary Organizations.

In a lecture recently to members of the voluntary religious organizations in Rogaland and Jæren, Secretary General Tormod Vågen, Norwegian Lutheran Mission, pointed out the threat to the voluntary contributions of laymen inherent in the setting up by the Church, as such, of the one new organization after the other during these years. It must end in a state of tension between the Church and the old religious organizations, especially if the intention is to draw the voluntary contributions in under the Church organizations, Mr. Vågen said. He felt that this would be a sign of dying life in the Church. In this connection he warned against a proposal for setting up new mission groups not affiliated to any of the existing voluntary bodies in the individual congregations. Although this might mean added financial support to the old organizations he was afraid that the independence of the organizations would thereby be sacrificed on the altar of economy.

News in Brief:

- Two new Bishops are to be elected in Norway this year. Bishop Alf Wiig, Tromsø, is due to retire on account of age on September 1st and Bishop Ragnvald Indrebø, Bjørgvin (Bergen), on November 1st.

At a meeting of the Union of Christian Workers, Mr. Isak Flatebø, P., advocated that a sympathetic attitude to Christianity should be cluded in the Programme of the Social Democratic Party. He was pported by, among others, two other Labour Members of Parliament.

This summer 20 students at Secondary Schools in Trondheim and Strind- im are invited to spend three weeks at Cologne as the guests of the blishing House of M. Dumont Schauberg and the newspaper "Kölner Stadt- nzeiger". The travelling expenses will also be provided, and the hosts ould prefer the young people to belong to families who were directly ffected by the War as, for instance, children whose fathers were either nprisoned by the Germans or lost their lives during German imprisonment.

SWEDEN

Church Day" at "Skansen".

In likeness with the "Church Day" of the Free Churches, which for several years has been celebrated on an Sunday at "Skansen", a beautiful park in Stockholm, a "Church Day" was celebrated there on Sunday, May 28th, for the first time. The programme was very comprehensive and avariated. Among other things, the much disputed ballet on the life of Jesus, which was shown on Swedish television on Good Friday (see CN No. 68), and the rtistic quality of which was acknowledged by all the critics, was per formed. There was an open air liturgical service; the Church Singing nion of the Diocese of Stockholm gave a concert at which the Bishop of ockholm Dr. Helge Ljungberg delivered an address; there was an Estonian d a young people's devotional service, and two church plays were per formed. A special post office had been established at which letters ere stamped with a first day cover and thus was of interest to philat elists. In connection with the Day there was a big Church exhibition hich is open from Whitsunday until after Midsummer.

g Debate in Parliament on the Establishment of Convent.

The two Chambers of the Swedish Parliament have come to diverging conclusions concerning the permission given for the establishment of a Carmelite convent in Sweden (see CN No. 68). The Government had granted the permission on the condition that after some years the majority of the Sisters were to be Swedish citizens. The Liberal Party and a Social emocratic Member of the Parliamentary Committee were, however, against such a restriction.

After a three hours' debate, during which the Roman Catholic efforts in Sweden were described and in the course of which attacks were directed against "Catholicizing tendencies" in the Swedish Lutheran National Church, the Chambers divided. First a motion that no permission at all should be given was rejected. Then the question of whether the permission was to be granted with or without the Government provision was put to the vote. In the First Chamber the Government proposal was victorious by 75 votes against 54, 6 Members abstaining from voting. In the Second Chamber the other proposal was carried by 92 votes against 86, 25 Members abstaining. The matter has now been returned to the Committee which is to try to find a compromise.

200 Sunday School Teachers Meet.

The National Sunday School Conference of the Swedish Lutheran Na tional Church is to take place at Linköping from June 14th - 18th, and roughly 1,200 Sunday school teachers are expected to take part. Among

ers, the Secretary General of the World Council of Christian Education • Andrew Wright, London, will attend the meeting.

During the past five years the number of children in the Sunday schools of the National Church has steadily gone up, so that there are 135,963 pupils. Since 1954 the staff of voluntary teachers has increased with 1,032 to 8,521. A branch of the work of the Sunday schools, so-called week-day or junior school, has also greatly increased, bearing 19,672 students to-day as against 5,898 in 1954.

s in Brief:

On the invitation of the Methodist Church, Miss Dorothy Kerin, Rrswood, England, has assisted at a number of divine services with others for invalids. About 4,000 people took part in the services, asked for intercession on their behalf, and many testified to being cured.

Towards the end of June the American missionary, Mr. Stanley es, will conduct an "Ashram" (retreat) at Rimforsa, Sweden.

The municipal government of the Swedish town of Skövde has decided include a chapel and conversation room in a new, big cultural centre ch is to be erected shortly. In this connection the local ministers the Lutheran National and the Free Churches have plans of a joint nd-the-clock pastoral care.

In a recent sermon at Norrmalm, Stockholm, where the largest congre- ion of the Swedish Baptist Church is situated, the minister, Rev. l Sörenson, strongly advocated that his Church join the World Council Churches. In Sweden the Baptist Church has a key position within Free Church co-operation. So far the Swedish Mission Covenant Church the only Free Church that has joined the World Council of Churches, most of them are affiliated to the Swedish Ecumenical Council.

At the Northern Conference for Sacred Music at the end of May, in Copenhagen a new Northern chorale book was introduced. This contains chorales, including 40 that are common to Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden (Sweden has not joined in this plan of work). It is intended that attention will be paid to this Northern chorale book at future revisions of the various national chorale books. A collection of hymns may be more suitable in the Northern countries. Co-operation with the conference - nations of Scandinavia were shown at modern sacred music was played. The Northern Conference for Sacred Music will take place in Oslo, Norway.

Choral Co-operation in Northern Europe

At a meeting in May in Stockholm representatives of Sunday school in the northern countries have agreed to an extensive co-operation in regard to the producing of materials for instruction in the Sunday schools, such as pictures, photos, posters, maps, films and Eigaerographs. The Northern Committee has set up for the purpose of securing the best possible quality of materials at lowest cost.

Refugees for Displaced Persons

At present there are about 1,000,000 displaced persons in Sweden, anyone arriving is immediately given food, shelter, and medical treatment has received refugee status, unless it is found to be justified complaint, cannot

